

My Progression.....

WRITING YOUR CLUB HISTORY

Clubs are often at the heart of a local community. Establishing a written record of your club's history can be useful, not only to your club and its members but also to the local community, as these histories are often interconnected.

The following will show you how to document the history of your club, so that you can preserve that valuable knowledge for the future. It will also look at the benefits of preserving your club history in writing, and have a look at the types of information you need to include.

What's a club history?

This section covers all of the important events and achievements that have occurred over the lifetime of the club. It provides an overview of where the club has come from and the key people involved in creating it. Often histories are written for a major event, such as the 10th or 50th anniversary of a club's founding.

Why do it?

For a club, the benefits of having a documented history include:

- interest and curiosity value for members or media
- having a sense of tradition
- understanding where certain policies or processes came from
- giving members a sense of belonging to an enduring organisation
- generating extra pride in the club
- generating ideas that may help your club
- demonstrating longevity to attract members and volunteers.

How to do it

Step 1: Set some boundaries

The first step is to clarify the scope of the history to be documented, that is, picking how wide and to what depth the club wants to know about its past. Scoping the project tightly means that it can be broken down into small manageable tasks and this avoids wasting time.

Your club will also need to delegate a person to coordinate the research efforts. This doesn't mean that they will have to do the whole thing – just be in charge of organising the project and assigning tasks where needed.

Areas to consider for research

- When/why was it founded?
- Who was involved at the start of the club?
- What were the names of the first members?
- Are any of the original members or their family members still part of the club?
- How many original members were there, and how many members are there now?
- What did the first membership cost?
- Were there any requirements for becoming a member, and what membership categories existed?
- Where were the original club facilities located? Have the club facilities moved since? If so, why?
- What facilities existed then and now?
- What competitions or club championship events were held, and who won them?
- Have club members represented the county? If so, who, when, how many times, what events and how did they perform?
- What awards or honours have been presented to the club?
- What awards or honours does the club present to members?

Step 2: Dig for information

The next step is doing the research! You'll need to find as much information as possible about the club over the years. To ensure accuracy, it's a good idea to cross-check and verify this where possible.

Try to find photos or similar as well. As the cliché says, a picture is worth a thousand words and they add interest to your research. In developing this section, your club might use a number of sources:

- experienced or long-serving club members
- club honours boards
- club/committee meeting minutes, documents and archives which can either be found at your own club or in some cases other local facilities
- Local/regional council records
- Local historical societies and museums.

Step 3: Get it on paper

The third step is to get writing! It will take time to craft, but collate all of your research into one place. Create an outline of what areas you are going to cover and then fill in the blanks. Be careful about including sensitive or debatable information - try to stick to the 'facts'. It's also a good idea to get your work edited by a single person at the end of the project so that the writing is well structured, readable, and free of grammatical and spelling mistakes.

How do we use our club history?

Release and communicate your work! It would be a shame if you did all that great work and then no-one ever saw it! Show club members what you've found. You might consider a special printed edition for an anniversary event, or uploading it onto the club website so you can update it over time.

Don't let it gather dust in the back of your club! Local media may be interested in it if you can demonstrate something interesting or take a unique angle. And free positive publicity is great for attracting members to your club.

TIPS FOR WRITING CLUB HISTORY

1. If writing a commissioned piece for a club, ensure that proper support structures are in place from the start; if writing off your own bat, be ultra-organised and work tight to deadlines.
2. Research as widely as you can in respect of sources; regurgitating the basic common narrative will defeat the purpose of your work.
3. Pursue old photographs with vigour – they are out there to be had, if you are persistent enough with your enquiries, and their value to a book should never be underestimated.
4. Try not to make the text top-heavy with recent material, which tends to be less intriguing than earlier and lacks the advantage of hindsight.
5. Navigate your thesaurus – constant references to a goal being scored and a match being won or lost, can begin to sound monotonous very quickly without some sparks of inspiration.